



United States Senator  
**Richard Shelby**  
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



## PUTTING ALABAMIANS FIRST

*By: Senator Richard Shelby*

Eighteen years ago, I made a commitment to the citizens of Alabama that each year I would visit every county in the state to listen and learn about the issues that are most important to them. Since that time, I have held over 1100 county meetings and learned the thoughts and concerns of thousands of Alabamians. I am pleased to make good on that commitment again this year.

I truly enjoy being back home in Alabama and these county meetings give me an opportunity to stay in touch with my constituents. Every county has unique concerns, and visiting each one allows me to learn what is important to people all across the state.

This year, a number of issues dominated the discussions during my meetings. In particular, we addressed funding for transportation and infrastructure projects, our military bases, jobs and the economy, the President's immigration proposal, judicial activism in the federal courts and, most importantly, the war in Iraq. Some of these issues are of national significance and others are specific to Alabama but hearing about them and learning the different views of citizens from across the state helps me better represent all Alabamians.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, I have worked diligently to increase the amount of federal funding that Alabama receives to improve our roads and infrastructure. Today, Alabama receives more federal transportation dollars than ever before, and this funding is helping to spur economic growth throughout the state. I believe that investing in our transportation system is essential to Alabama's long-term vitality because it creates business opportunities, increases our competitiveness, and brings jobs to some of the state's most needy regions.

We must not forget the importance of our military bases to Alabama and the nation. Communities in and around Fort Rucker, Redstone Arsenal, Anniston Army Depot, Maxwell/Gunter Air Force Base, and Guard and Reserve facilities across the state expressed their concerns to me about the upcom-

ing round of base closings. This is by far the largest round of base closings we have seen and every facility in the country will be considered. I am confident, however, that our bases are in a good position to survive this round of closings, and I am committed to providing them with the support they need to maintain their presence here in Alabama.

Like many Alabamians, I am watching the economy closely, and I believe that we are on the road to recovery. Businesses are doing better, consumer spending remains strong and we are creating new jobs. During my visits around the state, I heard from many counties that have been successful in recruiting new businesses and, as a result, have been successful in reducing their unemployment rate. While there are still those counties who struggle with high unemployment, I believe that job creation is possible and it is a goal that we should all work together to achieve.

I believe that the tax cuts, which we passed in 2001 and 2003, are helping our economy recover. This tax relief allows all Americans to keep more of their hard-earned money, while encouraging investment and allowing businesses to expand. I agree with the President that we must make these tax cuts permanent. If we do not, every American would face a tax increase and we would run the risk of derailing our economic recovery.

The President's immigration proposal was an issue that troubled many Alabamians, and I share their concerns that it would unfairly grant amnesty to hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants. I have long believed that our nation must have strong controls on the influx of illegal immigrants and I do not support the President's proposal. What kind of a message are we sending to legal immigrants and to those who are waiting patiently to move to the United States, when we reward illegal immigrants by allowing them to stay?

Judicial activism in the federal courts was brought up at many of my meetings particularly as the Supreme Court deliberates the fate of 'under God' in our Pledge of Allegiance. Over the years, we have seen a disturbing and growing trend in our federal courts

to deny the rights of our states and our citizens to acknowledge God openly and freely. This seems absurd to me and many Alabamians. Everyday, we open the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives with a prayer; 'In God We Trust' is inscribed on our currency; and when sworn into office, I am sworn to uphold the Constitution 'So help me God.' Our government and our laws are clearly based on Judeo-Christian values and a recognition of God as our Creator, yet activist judges continue to strip away these basic freedoms.

I have proposed important legislation that would restore our Constitutional system to the way our founding fathers intended. The 'Constitution Restoration Act' would prevent the federal courts from hearing cases regarding the acknowledgment of God by exercising Congress' authority under Article III of the Constitution to limit the jurisdiction of the federal courts. I will continue to work with my colleagues and the Senate leadership to ensure that this legislation is given full consideration.

Finally, the struggle in Iraq weighed heavily on the minds of Alabamians. I fully supported the President's decision to remove Saddam Hussein and his brutal regime, and I continue to believe that this was the right decision. While the last year has certainly been difficult, the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people are glad Saddam Hussein is gone, and the world will be a safer place because of it.

Many challenges remain in Iraq, but we are making progress and I believe we will be successful. I am proud of the work our troops have done to liberate the Iraqi people, and I am committed to providing them with the resources necessary to complete their mission. As the struggle continues, I extend my thoughts and prayers to those still serving in Iraq, their families here at home, and especially those who have lost loved ones defending our freedom in the global war on terror.

During my travels across the state, many other issues were discussed, and I will keep the priorities of each county in mind. I am honored to represent Alabama in the United States Senate, and I will continue to work in the best interests of our state and our nation.